

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (currently amended) Method for phased separation of a sausage strand, comprising the processing steps of:
  - A) supplying a sausage strand,
  - B) positioning the sausage strand relative to a separating element,
  - C) moving at least two pressing members forming part of the separating element toward each other with a first movement such that the sausage strand is constricted locally,
  - D) moving the pressing members ~~apart~~in the opposite direction, and
  - E) moving at least two cutting members forming part of the same separating element toward each other such that the sausage strand is separated at the position of the sausage strand constricted locally during processing step C).
2. (previously presented) Method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the sausage strand is supplied at a constant speed and that along a part of the transport path of the sausage strand the separating element is advanced parallel to the sausage strand.
3. (previously presented) Method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the sausage strand is locally constricted by at least partially displacing sausage dough locally from a casing enclosing the sausage dough.

4. (currently amended) Method as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that the sausage dough is displaced such that casing parts of the sausage strand on opposite sides are brought into contact with each other during constricting of the sausage strand as according to processing step C).

5. (previously presented) Method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the pressing members are provided with co-acting contact surfaces between which the sausage strand is engaged.

6. (previously presented) Method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the pressing members and the cutting members of a separating element are operated by a common drive.

7. (currently amended) Separating element for phased separation of a sausage strand, comprising:

at least two pressing members, which pressing members are relatively displaceable between a release position and an operative position in which the pressing members are placed closer together than in the release position, and

at least two cutting members assembled with the pressing members, which cutting members are relatively displaceable between a release position and a cutting position,

characterized in that the ~~cutting members are each rigidly paired to a pressing member and a~~ paired cutting member and pressing member are situated on individual arms located on opposite sides of the sausage strand to be separated.

8. (previously presented) Separating element as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that the separating element also comprises drive means connected to the pressing members and cutting members.
9. (previously presented) Separating element as claimed in claim 8, characterized in that the pressing members and cutting members are coupled to common drive means.
10. (previously presented) Separating element as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that the contact side of the pressing member of a rigidly coupled pair of pressing member and cutting member is directed toward the contact side of the cutting member coupled thereto.
11. (previously presented) Separating element as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that the separating element is supported by a displaceable holder.
12. (previously presented) Assembly of a plurality of separating elements as claimed in claim 7 characterized in that the separating elements are placed in line.
13. (previously presented) Assembly of separating elements as claimed in claim 12, characterized in that the mutual distance between successive separating elements is constant.
14. (previously presented) Assembly of separating elements as claimed in claim 12, characterized in that the separating elements are placed on the periphery of a rotatable wheel.

15. (previously presented) Assembly of separating elements as claimed in claim 12, characterized in that the separating elements are provided with cam followers which co-act with a cam track likewise forming part of the assembly, which cam followers and cam track are relatively displaceable.